

Department of Justice High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*



Addressing Interoperability

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Wireless Management Office (WMO) is working to improve long-term federal interagency communications across the Nation. As an interim step, and as a response to a request from the House/Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee staff, the DOJ WMO has been leading the High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project ("25 Cities") to provide targeted cities with basic and immediate interagency communications capabilities among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency response. Twenty-five cities were selected using criteria that included perceived risk and population size. As stakeholders in 1 of the 25 cities, Philadelphia metropolitan area, local, state, and federal public safety agencies have been working collaboratively with the DOJ WMO to address basic interoperable communications.

Participating Agencies

Partnership among Philadelphia area local, state, and federal public safety agencies has been instrumental in the development of comprehensive interoperability solution sets. Participating agencies have included—

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
- Bucks County
- Burlington County
- Camden County
- Chester County
- Cumberland County
- Delaware County
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Federal Protective Service (FPS)
- Gloucester County
- Montgomery County
- National Park Service (NPS)
- Philadelphia County
- Philadelphia Fire Department
- Philadelphia Police Department
- Philadelphia Department of Public Property (PDPP)
- Philadelphia Office of Emergency Management
- Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General
- Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
- Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)
- Salem County
- Southeastern Counterterrorism Task Force
- Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
- U.S. Marshals Service (USMS)
- U.S. Mint
- U.S. Secret Service

Key Successes

DOJ and area stakeholders successfully achieved basic interoperability and emergency response communications improvements in the Philadelphia metropolitan area through the implementation of two interoperability solutions. The solutions introduced a new wide-area interoperability resource and improved the use of existing, disparate, interoperability and communications systems by extending coverage, capacity, and availability to more public safety agencies. Additionally, in the course of meeting this project's interoperability goals, stakeholders were able to foster a working relationship among local, state, and federal agencies to resolve interoperability objectives for the area.

An interoperability channel was implemented to support interagency communications during an emergency response. DOJ installed a 350 watt very high frequency (VHF) conventional digital narrowband

transmitter, which also acts as a voted receiver, and eight voted receive sites strategically located to provide reliable on-street portable coverage throughout the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Hosted and maintained by the FBI, the new interoperability channel also enables local, state, and federal agencies operating on disparate radio systems to communicate while using their own agency's radio system. This channel is primarily reserved for communications among command and control personnel during emergency responses.

To extend connectivity to the interoperability channel, radio frequency consolets were implemented at FEMA, FPS, Philadelphia OEM, SEPTA and U.S. Mint locations. DOJ also provided a wireline circuit to connect the DEA dispatch console to the FBI's dispatch console. To extend coverage underground, DOJ provided a VHF consolette to SEPTA for integration with its RIOS fixed audio switch. The SEPTA fixed audio switch networks together several public safety radio systems in the Philadelphia metropolitan area and can connect the federal interoperability channel to any of these radio systems, including the SEPTA radio system. Agencies operating in the VHF band can communicate directly on the federal interoperability channel or request a patch via the SEPTA interoperability audio switch.

The second interoperability solution supported equipment upgrades to three existing audio switches owned and operated by the FBI, PDPP, and PSP. Upgrades included the purchasing of new software, patch cables, and mobile and portable radios. These upgrades ensure that area audio switches are ready for emergency deployment and interoperability with disparate communications systems in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Agency technicians received training from the audio switch manufacturer, JPS Communications, to effectively operate the new equipment.

In order to address the management of the new interoperability equipment, DOJ worked with local, state, and federal agencies to develop standard operating procedures (SOP's). These SOP's outlined the use of the communications equipment to assist in the proper operation of these interoperability resources.

Moving Forward

The cooperation and support between participating agencies and DOJ WMO provided scalable solutions designed to give additional agencies future access to the interoperability solutions. Sustained operations, maintenance, and support of these interoperability solutions will be coordinated by key stakeholders. These efforts, along with stakeholder support, will ensure continuity in addressing interoperable communications among public safety agencies in the Philadelphia metropolitan area.

Contact Information

If you would like to know more about this initiative and the interoperability solutions, please contact—

Interoperability Channel / Mobile Audio Switches

Ted Gladfelter
FBI
(856) 845-7575
TAGALARM@netscape.com

Mobile Audio Switches

John MacLean
Office of Emergency Management
(215) 686-1151
John.Maclean@phila.gov

Gerry Langston
Pennsylvania State Police
(215) 560-6209
gelangston@state.pa.us